2: Read E-S (1935-1939) 1956
FRS Ngoni FRS

The three final acts of the *mimbo* were performed for the new wife by the women of her new village. The first took place about two days after the end of the main ceremony and was the occasion for her instruction by her husband's relatives. She sat on a mat by the *indlunkulu*, while the women of that house dressed her *isikhele*, anointed her with oil, and clothed her in fresh skins and new beads taken from the store of the house to which she now belonged. They then instructed her in her behaviour to old and young, telling her to avoid selfishness and quarrelling and to be friendly with everyone. 585 192. 621

The second act, called *ukuphumisa umkhokheli* (bringing the wife out), took place thirty to forty days later, during which time the wife had been sitting by her hut being watched. All this time she had eaten only a little food, went to her from her mother-in-law's hut, had been afraid to speak to anyone, and had wept often. Now she was told that she might go anywhere and talk with anyone. She could help her mother-in-law by fetching firewood and by lighting her fire. A pot of water was given to her and an axe to cut firewood, and her mother-in-law gave her the *indlokazo* head, a sign that she might speak and eat in front of her parents-in-law. But her testing time was not yet over. She was told to fetch a huge bundle of split wood and to lay it down carefully before her mother-in-law's hut without dropping any. As the bundle was on her head, it meant kneeling down and bending forward slowly until she could gently ease the wood on to the ground. Other tests included stripping large quantities of maize, soaking them, and pounding them into stamped maize (*isinkubo*). This testing was called *ukudinga umkhokheli* (watching the new wife), and was in most cases far more exacting than anything she had been made to do in her own home. [402] [252]

The culminating act of the integration process, *ukupeka umkhokheli*, in which the new wife's hut was recognised as the starting-point of a new house, was the ceremony of making fire in her new hut to cook food for her husband. Two or three months after the marriage, a woman from her father-in-law's *gogo* house suddenly appeared in the doorway of the new wife's hut, carrying three hearth-stones. She fetched fire, kindled it, and began to cook boiled maize. The astonished young wife was expected to cry because she had now been turned away from her mother-in-law's cooking-place, as if she were being put out of the house. The maize cooked on this first fire in the new hut was regarded as having been cooked by the bride, and was divided into portions, one being taken to each section of the village attached to a house. Meanwhile the young wife sat nearby, hanging her head and showing the conventional signs of grief. Nevertheless she was so excited that she went back to her own home as soon as possible to tell them the news. The response of her own people was to prepare food for a feast and bring it to her new village to express to her husband's people their appreciation of this token of confidence in the girl's ability to cook for her husband.

2: Read E-S (1935-1939) 1956
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on was placed on it. The meat in the basket and on the gate stayed there all night.

Following the ritual of offering meat to the spirits came the ritual of cooking and eating this meat, both that offered to the spirits and the rest. After the basket of meat had been left all night in the place of the spirits, the large quantity on the gate was carried away and cooked by an old woman outside the hut of Bambo Manga's granddaughter. The meat in the basket which had been offered to the spirits was put in a pot and cooked on the fire in Bambo Manga's hut. It stayed cooking all day and all night till the following morning. Dzinthengo Phungwako, an old and highly respected *Sikoda*, came to the hut and divided the sacrificial meat among all who were in the house, that is Bambo Manga, her daughter and granddaughter and several senior women. When they had finished the leading women stood up and thanked '*Zikhomo Mawiko*', '*Zikhomo Magwagwa*'. Then they washed their hands and went to their own houses.

The large quantity of meat which had been laid on the gate and cooked on another fire in another *kumdo* was carried in a big pot and put down outside Bambo Manga's hut in the late afternoon. Her daughter came outside and divided the meat into three piles: a small one from the breast-bones for the women, a leg for the chief, the head for Kalowani the headman of a neighbouring village, and the rest in a big pot for the men. A boy came to tell Lopezi that all was ready and he and the chief went out to the place where the beast was killed, near the gate of the kraal. There were four groups already sitting there and the chief and Lopezi made a fifth: the *mabuku*, the senior men; the *majoko*, the young men; the *mabusa*, the herd-boys; and the little boys. Before Lopezi divided the meat he and the chief washed elaborately with water brought in a gourd, and then he washed the knife before cutting the meat. He called the *mabuku* to send someone for their portion in a basket, then the young men and the herd-boys were given their portions—a basket for each group, and the small boys had bits put in their hands. The eating was very sedate, there was no snatching of choice bits, and in each group the one who fetched the meat distributed it. There was the general atmosphere of a ritual meal rather than a feast, though the small boys smacked their lips appreciatively. From time to time Lopezi called up someone from a group and gave him a bit more to divide up. When it was all eaten, a boy was sent to fetch water and the soapy leaves which the Ngoni used for washing, and the chief and Lopezi and the *mabuku* all washed the grease off their fingers. Then Lopezi stood up and called out '*Siyabonga baba, nikomo matwana wenkosi*', 'We are praising you, father, thank you child of the Paramount', and the others all agreed and said '*Zikhomo baba.*' Then they all went together to Bambo Manga's hut and stood opposite her door and called out the same thanks. The women who had eaten their meat

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FRS Ngoni FRS

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6.7. Pounding maize

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[facing p. 93]

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FRS Ngoni FRS

THE THRESHOLD OF ADULTHOOD (1)

When the boy's voice began to break, and his father or another older man noticed it, the second part of the ritual took place. The father's brother went to a senior man famed in the village as a herbalist and obtained from him several kinds of roots. These were ground and then cooked either in milk or in the cud from a goat's stomach, usually the latter, for the father liked it to be known that he killed a goat for his son. If the mixture was cooked in milk, a fowl was killed, and in either case the boy was given the meat to eat immediately after the mixture to take away the extremely bitter taste. The cooking took place on a small fire by the kraal gate in the presence of the male members of the father's house. The boy was told to dip the tips of his fingers in the mixture as it was bubbling in the pan and to lick them quickly. He was not expected to show that he found the mixture very bitter as well as hot to touch. At intervals the boy had to jump over the fire, hitting his elbows and knees with the palms of his hands. The more often he did this, the less often did he have to dip in the pan because the mixture soon dried up, but he had to continue dipping and licking till there was no liquid left. The senior men watched intently all through this performance because they believed the mixture not only helped physical growth and muscular strength but would prevent impotence. When this ritual was performed for the heir of a chief, it was followed by a war-dance in the cattle kraal and the boy had to take a second dose of medicine in the kraal surrounded by the warriors. In such a case a bull was killed instead of the customary goat, and the contents of its stomach used for mixing the medicine. The meat was eaten by the boy and his father's relatives.

As in the case of the girls, this boy's ritual was an occasion for asserting the authority of the father and his kin over the boy. For him there was however no separating off into another group after this maturing. He continued to live in the dormitory, herd cattle, and go to school as before.

3: Read E-S (1935-1939)1960
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29| severed portions. On branches of fresh leaves, brought by the
56| younger herd-boys, were piled the sections of the animal, down to the last bit of intestine, for distribution according to a fixed Ngoni pattern.

29| A senior man of the house owning the beast, when all was
82| ready, 'counted' all the parts, that is he named each part, head, horns, tail, feet, joints and internal organs, and each was pointed out to him as being present. The herd-boys stand-
[90] ing round learned the names of the organs and the sections of the animal, and heard the names and status of the men to whom the parts were assigned. The herd-boys of the family of the owner were given certain symbolic parts: an ear, an eye and the nose, for hearing, seeing and smelling; parts of an artery and of an intestine as controlling the blood flow and the waste material, and the rectum as ejecting waste; and the foot for walking steadily and fast.

Some of the meat was roasted over a fire, parts like the
252 stomach and intestines were cleaned and boiled, some was
[251] dried slowly on a rack over a fire of green wood, and put in fibre bags for keeping. The blood was taken to the head woman of the house owning the herd. She cooked it with the fat round the kidneys till it coagulated and formed a dish, salty and meaty, much liked by the Ngoni, and rather akin to black pudding. The women also took over any spare fat and rendered it down and clarified it to use as
[278] unguents.

The young adult who had had six or seven years of
293 herding cattle and had advanced to be a senior herd-boy,
868 had acquired not only certain manual skills such as those just described, but also some knowledge of the anatomy of cattle, some idea of the social attitudes towards cattle and their ownership, and some idea of their economic value to the Ngoni. For certain restricted ritual purposes, a cow in calf had to be killed for sacrifice, and herd-boys saw the foetus removed when the cow was cut up. They were also often present at the birth of calves in the bush, and had to wait

Maize, the Ngoni staple cereal which had replaced the tall millet they had formerly preferred, was stored on the cob in the grain stores which were described in Chapter IV. Women whose husbands could afford to hire labour to work in their fields often had three or four large grain stores, and their presence in the compound conferred importance on their owners. Inside the hut were earthenware jars of beans, cowpeas, bulrush millet, clarified fat and butter, dried chillies, while from the rafters hung bunches of herbs and dried green spinach. Some of the jars were polished a shining black, others had a blue or green glaze on them. It was a Ngoni girl's ambition to go to her new home when married with a good array of storage pots, baskets, mats, spoons, stirring sticks, and a wooden meat-dish. This would show her in-laws that she was industrious and intended to have a high standard of household management in her new home.

Varieties of food and their preparation

Ngoni women prided themselves on feeding their households well, both in variety, quantity and quality. Although they could rely on helpers to work in the gardens and to do some of the preparing of food before cooking, they always managed their own supplies and provided a variety of menus, and showed that they could cook well themselves and instruct others.

Ngoni girls clustered round the fire when a special dish was being prepared. They watched every movement of their mother as she lifted one pot off the fire and put another on, measured out water in a spoon to add to the sauce, stirred the maize porridge strongly and evenly to get rid of lumps and bubbles, washed each stirring stick in a pot of water before using it again.

There was variety in the dishes served from day to day in big Ngoni households, usually in the form of a main dish of cereal with side dishes of broth and vegetables and less often of meat or chicken. The main dish was served in the

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

262 [415] round covered food basket, the side dishes in small covered earthenware bowls. Among the traditional Ngoni dishes learned by girls were the following:

252 262 Gruel made of cow's milk and maize flour (for young children).
Whole maize boiled with beans and round peas.
Sweet potatoes boiled, peeled and mashed with tomatoes.
Beans and finger millet flour cooked separately and then stirred together.
Pumpkins cooked with ground-nut paste.
Ground-nut flour cooked with scraps of meat.
Whole tall millet pounded with ground-nuts.
Pot-roast chicken with tomatoes, onions and ground-nuts.

In Ngoni households meat when cooked in large quantities, 262 415 not just as broth made from bones and tithits, was served on a special wooden meat-dish, round or oblong with rounded ends, and supported on three sturdy legs. This meat-dish was an integral part of the equipment of every 'true Ngoni' [264] household, and, like the French housewife's omelet pan, was after use wiped clean and polished with clarified fat. The outside of these meat-dishes was often decorated with 'poker [531] work' designs by the maker, and such decorated and shining meat-dishes were treasured as heirlooms. Other, but rare, 415 heirlooms were hammered brass pots with a flat bottom and turned over edge, of the pattern known in India as *dekshis*. The Ngoni women who owned them declared they had been brought by their ancestors from the south.

All the extra fat when a beast was killed was sent to the 251 women of the 'house' in whose herd it was, and this fat was cooked until it was clarified, and then stored. Butter was made by shaking milk in a gourd, and it was also clarified [234] for keeping. Formerly milk curds were made daily by the senior women and kept to mature in a jar before being eaten. Only in a few Ngoni households was this still done.

275 Beer was made on special occasions when the women had

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

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28. Learning to carry wood

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29. Learning to pound

[facing page 145]

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

which the marriage lacked substance. We may look on these rites as fulfilling two social functions. Firstly they affirmed the position of the bride as wife of her husband, and secondly they emphasized the role of her parents as parents-in-law. In all the ceremonies of marriage the man and his wife were supported by members of their own groups, but we do not know exactly who these supporters were. They may have been agnatic kin, maternal kin, neighbours, or political superiors. From what we know of modern marriage it is likely that the composition of these groups of supporters was never rigidly determined.

The beginning of the marriage was announced at a ceremony which we may refer to as the gall bladder rite. It was held in the man's village and, after a beast had been killed, the bride was anointed with its gall and intestinal fat.[14] Another rite, which took place up to a year later, was held when the bride cooked food for her husband for the first time.[15] Before this ceremony she relied for her food on the man's other wives or his mother or grandmother. If the marriage was a successful one, that is, if the woman had borne live children and the husband was treating her well, the woman's parents showed their appreciation of their son-in-law by sending him, from time to time, presents of beer.[16] The son-in-law, or his father, rewarded the women who brought the beer with a present of meat. Later, the wife's parents brewed beer for the son-in-law and called him to their village so that he might formally enter his wife's mother's hut.[17] Later still, a ceremony was held at which the man and his wife's mother ate together.[18] At these rites of entering into the mother-in-law's hut or eating with her, a beast was sometimes killed by the father-in-law for the benefit of the man.

4. Relationship to affines

Apart from the specific ceremonial obligations there were continuing obligations of hospitality and assistance between the two groups. There was always visiting between them, and indeed

[14] This ceremony is called *lusiwa*, a word said to be of Zulu origin whose meaning I have been unable to trace. Informants were unable to say what it meant. The gall bladder is called *nyongo*, from the Zulu *inyongo*. Rattray, op. cit. pp. 40 and 114, and Scott, *A cyclopaedic dictionary of the Mang'anja language spoken in British Central Africa*, p. 486, both translate the Nyanja word *nyongo* as spleen, but from Rattray's description of a marriage ceremony it seems that a gall bladder must have also been in use among the Ngoni of Southern Nyasaland.

[15] *Mphikiso*. Cf. the Zulu *uku-phikisa*, to help or make to cook. Weiss, op. cit. 'Expedição . . .', pp. 473-4, and 'Geschichte . . .', p. 192 describes what seems to be a similar ceremony, which he says took place a few days after marriage.

[16] All offerings of beer which are carried from one place to another, to a son-in-law or to a headman or chief, are called *utipeko*. Cf. Zulu *uku-phaka*, to cook.

[17] Called *nengwisa*. Cf. Zulu *uku-ngenisa*, to enter another person's hut.

[18] Called either *nenyelemo*, from the Zulu *uku-dlena*, or *kulyelena*, from the Ndonga *ku-lyelena*, both verbs meaning 'to eat together'.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946, 1949) 1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

an adequate garden for his wife. He may clear a fresh garden on 591
rejuvenated land, or enlarge his wife's or his wife's garden, depending 24
on how they are placed. It is usually not until much later in the 343
marriage that a man starts a garden of his own, distinct from the one
nominally owned by his wife. The work of clearing a new place for 24
a garden is not, among the Ngoni, necessarily a man's job, and can 962
be undertaken by a woman alone if she has no man to assist her.
If the husband is present, he does most of the tree felling, and his
wife breaks up the new ground with her hoe.

The planting, weeding, and cultivating are all done by both men
and women, and during the weeding season a man goes to the garden
with his wife early in the morning and they both work there until
they are tired. Later, when the growing crop has to be protected
against monkeys by day and wild pigs by night, they both spend
long hours on watch in the garden shelter. At harvest, both cut
down the maize and lift the ground crops, but only the woman can
carry the produce to the village. If the man helps, it is by bringing [492]
a cart or sledge and taking home a large load pulled by oxen.

In the other subsistence pursuit of animal husbandry and hunting,
there is no co-operation between husband and wife until the animals 224
have been killed, when the woman has to cook the meat. Hunting 233
is entirely a male occupation, and animal husbandry largely so. 962
If a man goes away on a journey he leaves his cattle in charge of his
son or brother or father rather than with his wife. If there is no
trustworthy man available, then they become his wife's responsibility,
but all she in fact does is to see that the senior herdboy reports to
her every evening about the state of the beasts. Small stock such
as goats and sheep and pigs may be looked after entirely by the wife,
and chickens are likely to be in her care.

A man looks to his wife to feed him, and it is considered a reflection 593
on her industry if he does not get enough and has to hang about 362
when his companions are eating in the hope that they will invite
him to join them. She feeds his within the exigencies of the food-
supply, which often involves semi-starvation in February and March.
She is expected to cook competently, and if a woman continually [252]
burns the porridge which forms the basis of every meal, there will
be stride between her and her husband. If she proves to be a really
bad cook her husband may send her home again to be taught properly.

Beer-brewing is the work of women, and is a process lasting at 273
least six days even after all the correct ingredients have been 462
mustered. There is some variation with status in the extent to
which husbands require their wives to brew beer, and it is in any
case a matter in which the woman can take the initiative. Important [55A]
men and chiefs who have many visitors like to be able to offer beer
to their guests, so that queens spend much time brewing. But [54A]
common men need to conserve their food supplies more carefully,
and know that their visitors will be disappointed but not surprised
if there is no beer. A woman sometimes brews to sell the beer and gain [437]
money to buy herself clothes, & her husband has no money
to give her.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

life as a young girl. She gives the half-pounded maize to the bride- 585
groom's mother.

In neither of the two ceremonies I saw did the husband play any large part. He did not appear when his bride was instructed. His father sent word to him that all was going well, but he himself stayed out of the way at the other end of the village. Sometimes, however, the bridegroom does sit with his bride on the mat and is instructed with her.

Another gall bladder ceremony which I recorded was held at the time the bride went to live with her husband. This was in an intra-village marriage. In the evening the bride came with important women from her section of the village. The bridegroom's relatives were waiting to receive them, and promised to give them a beast. The bride was then handed over to them. The women went back to their own division, and returned the next day to claim the beast and wash the bride. The beast, an ox, was killed and the intestines [p31] were placed round the neck of a younger sister of the bride who became the designated linked co-wife.

If Christians hold the gall bladder ceremony before the bride begins to live with her husband, it is followed by a ceremony in church. The bride does not come back to live with her husband after the gall bladder ceremony but instead goes with her relatives to the local church, where they meet a party from the man's village, and the arrangements for the marriage are set in hand. After three weeks the couple are married in church. The bride then goes back again to her village and as before she pounds flour. After a few days she comes to live with her husband, or he comes to live with her.

Appendix II

FIRST COOKING

When a woman begins her marriage in her husband's village, 592
she cannot cook food until she has been invited to do so by her 593
husband's parents. Until then, she relies on food cooked by her
co-wives or her mother-in-law or grandmother-in-law. This state of affairs may last from a month up to a year. It is ended by the ceremony of 'making to cook' (*mpishise*). I did not see this ceremony, and I have relied on the accounts of informants. It is said that a man's parents would be ashamed of their poverty if they did not entertain the new bride as a guest until the time had come for her to join in the general run of domestic work in the village.

The man's parents decide when the ceremony shall be held. On the day, the man's sisters, mothers and grandmothers prepare flour, plates, porridge pat and stirring stick in the house of the man's

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FRS Ngoni FRS
Mpezeni

mother. One of the man's sisters conducts the wife to her mother-in-law's hut, and under the instruction of the assembled women she begins to cook. Although people speak of her doing the cooking, in practice all she does is to look on while her sisters-in-law do the work. The porridge is divided onto plates and distributed under the directions of the man's mother. One plate is sent to the man's father, one to the husband who eats the porridge with his brothers, and one to the most important woman in the village, while some are taken by the cooks themselves. The man's father is expected to remark on how well the porridge has been cooked, but he may say that it has been poorly prepared and his daughter-in-law must be taught again. This expression of disapproval cannot be more than a way of showing his dislike for his daughter-in-law for whatever he says the ceremony is not repeated and the woman begins to cook regularly for her husband. If the man's relatives are wealthy, they may kill a goat or a sheep on this occasion, or the woman's parents may send a sheep or a goat to be killed and eaten. The woman's parents cannot themselves attend the ceremony.

If the couple begin their marriage unorthodoxly this ceremony does not take place. The bride begins to cook for her husband as soon as he comes to live with her, using her grand-mother's hut as a kitchen.

Appendix III

THE HOEING PARTY

A man is under an obligation to provide once during his marriage a party of hoers who work in his wife's mother's garden for the greater part of one day and who are rewarded by his wife's father. This party is called by the general word for obligations owed by a man towards his parents-in-law, *cikowerwa*.[1] The function of this occasion, as a socially sanctioned method of expression of hostility between a man and his affines, has already been discussed. I attended one of these parties and my clerk attended two others.

The man, or a relative of his, tells his father that he is planning to bring a party to hoe on such and such a day. If the father-in-law agrees that the day is suitable he tells his wife to brew beer for the hoers. On the agreed day the hoeing party arrive early in the morning and begin to work in the garden. The father-in-law promises presents to the leader of the hoers, who continue to hoe until they are offered what they consider is sufficient. They then stop, and go to the village to receive the present and drink beer.

[1] See above, p. 74.

10: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1959
FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

children, but it is unusual to find more than two adults living in the same hut. These may be either man and wife, or two women who are unmarried or whose husbands are away. Adolescent boys sleep in dormitories containing a number of boys, and there are similar huts for girls. Smaller children sleep with whoever is responsible for their upbringing, parents, grandparents, or other relative, as the case may be. Children in fact sleep in a variety of huts, sometimes with their elders and sometimes with one group of playmates, sometimes with another. Polygynists divide their time between their several wives, although they may tend to keep their belongings in the hut of their chief wife. Men do not as a rule possess huts of their own apart from those of their wives.

The hut is said to belong to the man or woman living in it. There is a tendency to refer to the man as the owner if the marriage is patrilocal and to the woman if it is matrilocal, but this is not an invariable rule, and the builder of the hut, who may be living elsewhere, may be referred to as the owner. About half the dwelling huts have kitchens near by, separate huts of similar construction which are used for cooking and as sleeping-places for children and visitors. When there is no separate kitchen, cooking is done inside the dwelling hut or on the veranda.

The village, then, is a collection of buildings of different types, in which people sleep and keep their possessions, animals are sheltered, and food stored. We must now consider how the inhabitants of the village are organized.

Structure

Royal villages have names in the Ngoni language that were given by their founders. For example, there is a regal village founded by Singu, the eldest son of Mpezeni I, called Ngalaweni, meaning 'dormitory', as it was there that he put his wives. These villages are also sometimes referred to by the name of the senior queen for whom they were founded.

Most commoner villages, however, do not possess names of this type, and are known only by descent-names or by the names of individuals. These are usually the name and descent-name of the founder of the village, the man who first established the village as a separate unit. It is this individual name that is used to refer to the present headman of the village, the man recognized by the chief and the Administration as responsible for the village. This office is hereditary,

/12 cont'd/

252 The maize is shelled as required, the grains are pounded in a mortar, and then soaked in water for three or four days, if there is time. They are then pounded again, and the flour winnowed out. [831] The residue is ground between two stones. The husks obtained after [213] the first pounding are used as animal fodder, and in beer making. The diligent housewife pounds twice a week, each pounding lasting for about three hours. It is usual for a group of women living as [461] neighbours to pound at the same time, singing together.

[251] The maize flour is dried in the sun, and then put into a pot or basket until required for porridge or beer. Porridge forms the basis 262 of most meals, although in February and March there may not be enough maize left in the storehouses to make this possible. Adults [264] eat porridge in solid form, kneading handfuls of it between their fingers before eating, but infants are fed on fluid porridge made from [853] the ground flour. The herdboys in charge of the cattle may use the milk to make their porridge with. Cooking is women's work, but [464] men by themselves on a journey or working on the tobacco farms will cook porridge for themselves. Green mealies, usually fried, are eaten when available.

263 Relish is required to go with the porridge, the commonest relishes being pumpkin leaves and hibiscus leaves. There are in addition 222 many wild fruits and leaves searched for in the bush at their appro- 241 priate seasons, while the gardens provide pumpkins, cucumbers, 262 various kinds of beans and peas, and edible gourds. The most sought-after relish, and one of the most infrequently found, is meat. Chick- 262 ens are given to honoured visitors, while beef, mutton, pork, and goat meat are eaten when they can be found. Livestock other than chickens are killed for eating only on ceremonial occasions, such as [231] funerals or marriages, but owners not infrequently kill animals and sell the meat to raise money to pay damages, to finance a journey, or to obtain labour in the garden. Animals that die are usually eaten. Some people keep ducks, pigeons and tame guinea fowl, while such 235 game as is killed on the /13/ hunt is divided among the hunters and 224 taken home to be eaten. Owners of guns sometimes hunt by themselves and sell the meat.

13:Fraser M-5 (ca. 1890) 1901
FR5 Ngoni FR5

condition. It helped to maintain the comparatively high morality of the people. And it was never allowed to go to the extremes that the Tonga or others went to when a single chief would have 100 wives. The expensiveness of marriage put a limit on a man's matrimonial ambitions. Yet polygamy was essentially an evil custom. It was based on sensuality and on indolence. And when Christianity comes bringing industry, and self-restraint, it must disappear.

In the old days the chiefs would not allow the men to marry till they were over thirty, and the women were strong and full grown. This preserved the splendid physique of the tribe. But now the laxer customs of the Central Africans is telling on the Ngoni, and one of our hardest tasks is to absolutely refuse marriage to couples whom we think to be too young for this serious responsibility. I have a marriage service every Tuesday, at which I usually unite eight or ten couples in holy wedlock. But these have first of all to come to me that I must judge by appearance, for they cannot tell their ages, whether they have reached the stature of manhood and womanhood. Then if I am satisfied the banns are published and they are married.

But before a man has reached this stage, he must first pay his father-in-law a dowery for his daughter. The value of the dowery varies, according to the rank of the family into which he would marry. The daughter of a chief might be worth to her father as much as twenty cattle, while a slave might only receive two or three goats This also was a great restraint on early marriages, for a man could not marry until he had time to gain a little wealth, and pay for his wife.

The position of a wife of an aristocrat was one of considerable ease and dignity. She had to work certainly, but she had also a considerable following of slaves to assist her in her labours. But the position of the wives of the commoners was little better than that of slaves. When the rains came on the husband sallied out with his wives. He sat on an ant hill and snuffed, and from this exalted position directed the labours of his wives who hoed.

In this the Ngoni were less noble than their neighbours, for many of the surrounding people think it is a disgrace to send the woman to the gardens. When the harvesting came, the women went to the gardens and reaped and carried home the grain, while the husband prepared the barns. And women pounded the grain and cooked it. While the men had the pleasure of eating it.

13:Fraser M-5 (ca. 1890) 1901
FR5 Ngoni FR5

The art of cultivating the ground is only now being learned by the Ngoni. Formerly this was the work of the slaves. The masters know how to kill not to till. The soil is fairly rich though not nearly so fertile as what is found at the lake shore and in the deep valleys between. Maize is the great crop. But owing to the devastation of locusts for several years in succession, the Ngoni have learned to plant also reserve gardens of kasava, for the locusts and drought can scarcely affect this crop. A great variety of vegetables is cultivated, peas, beans, tomatoes, pumpkins, and so on. I have counted a variety of twenty-two different vegetables in the gardens beside one village.

These vegetables are used as relish, but the staple food is always maize porridge, and a tasty dish it is. The maize is well cleaned, ground into a fine flour, and when cooked by a clever woman makes a most tempting dish of white porridge. The relish may consist of a piece of stewed fowl or goat, or well boiled vegetable. The greatest dainty that was ever offered to me was a dish of lovely maize porridge with relish of stewed caterpillars. I did without the relish on that occasion. An interesting thing about these caterpillars is that they live on the top of trees, and the natives, to get at them, will hew down the tree. You can see how delicate a dish it makes if every caterpillar in the dish has been got at the cost of a tree. They take the place of the old European dish of peacocks cooked in their feathers.

No native thinks he has eaten until he has had his porridge. A missionary whom I know once unwisely gave a feast to his elders, feeding them on European food. They ate till they could eat no more, then stretching themselves, and after politely expressing their satisfaction by audible sounds of satiety, they rose and and said, "We must now go home to our porridge."

The maize and vegetables are grown with very little trouble, but there is also a species of millet which is largely cultivated, and at great cost to the country. The ground has to be carefully prepared, trees are hewn down in the hot season, and left to dry up in the blazing sun. The whole patch of garden is covered over with these trees and the branches, then when the first clouds appear, the wood is fired. For a day it blazes, and then during the gathering of the clouds the atmosphere is thick with the smoke of burning trees. The rains come and wash the carbon into the soil, and it makes an excellent fertiliser. But the crop exhausts the ground in two or three years, so another patch of